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ABSTRACT

Reporting on research in progress, this paper centers on the relationship between the role of day care and the hegemonic process of ideological saturation that sustains the existing social order. The similarity between day care and the school is demonstrated through examination of a day care worker training program in one day care center in Canada, existing research, and curriculum development. The current level of critical sociological analysis of day care is emphasized, and an approach which addresses the phenomenological analysis of the day-to-day activities of day care within a broader analysis of educational hegemony is presented. (Author/MP)

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IDEOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF DAY CARE

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ABSTRACT

Reporting on research in progress, the discussion centres on the relationship between the role of day care and the hegemonic process of ideological saturation which sustains the existing social order. The similarity between day care and the school is demonstrated through an examination of day care training, existing research and curriculum development. The current level of critical sociological analysis of day care is emphasized and an approach which addresses the phenomenological analysis of the day-to-day activities of day care within a broader analysis of educational hegemony is presented.

Changes in the social, political and economic organization of Canada has attracted an increasing number of women to the labour market.[1] Correspondingly, an increasing number of children are attending some form of day care prior to and during their early years of formal schooling.[2]

Rather than assume that kindergarten is the first initiation all children have into the social world of school and work, day care, particularly day care centres, have become extensions of our existing educational systems in Canada. While day care is not formally controlled or funded through provincial departments of education, much of the staff training, curriculum development and program activities have been developed by professional educators or from an educational perspective.[3]

This brief discussion centres upon the relationship between ideology and day care.* The intent of the larger study is to demonstrate that, similar to the school, day care is involved in the hegemonic process of ideological saturation which perpetuates beliefs, values, norms, and behaviours on a mass scale to sustain the existing social order and societial 'weltunschauung'.[4]

* This paper is based upon research notes and data presently being collected for the author's Ph.D. thesis at the University of Alberta, Dept of Educational Foundations.

DAY CARE CENTRES AS SCHOOLS

Each province has control over the provision of day care services. In Saskatchewan, day care is liscensed through the Day Care Section of the Department of Social Services. According to provincial day care regulations a day care centre is a facility, other than a private dwelling unit, where day care services are provided to more than four children. Some large urban day care centres have as many as 60 children between 18 months to 12 years of age in attendance.[5] Of the total population of day care children in the City of Regina, Saskatchewan 93% attend a day care centre on a full time basis (up to nine hours per week day); 70% of these children were between two and five years of age and over 70% of all day care centres in the city had more than 40 children in attendance.[6]

Besides meeting the City of Regina zoning regulations and the provincial facility requirements, each day care centre staff must provide to the Day Care Section, documentation of the centre's program philosophy including a daily timetable and outline of general activities. As well, all day care staff must complete the 40 hour training program provided by various community colleges in the province.[7] The 1981 Saskatchewan Day Care Report also recommended the development of a certification board to monitor and maintain provincial standards for day care workers. The Day Care Section staff are to play an active role in the ongoing inservices of all day care staff.

These developments suggest that there is a correspondence between day care and the school. Like the school, "a great many of the functions or purposes are built upon correspondences and structural linkages with other institutions in our society".[8] In isolation, each correspondence suggests a different rationale and defines divergent objectives, functions, structures and participant roles for the school or day care centre.[9] In reality, both institutions reflect a complex nexus of relationships which correspond to the larger arrangement of institutions in society.

Briefly, day care centres function in a fashion similar to schools. Both institutions have been considered extensions of the family, as custodians of the general welfare of children; as detection and remediation agencies for other child care service providers; as institutions which sort children according to their individual competencies; as institutions dominated by professional educators and child development experts and finally; like the school, the commonsense meanings, practices and day-to-day activities of a day care centre cannot be considered neutral. By the very nature of the institutions, the educator in the school and the day care worker in a day care centre, whether consciously or not, are involved in a political act.

Day care, particularly day care centres, have become aspects of the social and cultural control in society. Therefore, day care should be examined from a sociological perspective which recognizes not only its similarity to the institution of the school but its unique role as an educational institution.

ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL REPRODUCTION THESES

In attempting to address the reproduction of consciousness, many neo-Marxist critiques of education project a passive model of man through their reliance upon deterministic one-to-one correspondence between the social relations of education and economic production.[10] Such perspectives envision the social organization of the school as a 'black box' and fail to demonstrate 'how' these reproductive mechanisms are built into the school.

Like the economic thesis, the cultural reproduction thesis relies upon a deterministic perspective of human action. The cultural reproduction thesis emphasizes that the existing social relations in society are perpetuated by the school converting the hierarchy of 'cultural capital'[11] into an academic hierarchy which discriminates in favour of those who are the inheritors of the upper classes of society. The school is said to sanction the inequalities of our stratified society behind an external image of equality and universality.

Both theses ignore the significance of day-to-day human activity in society. The structure and function of the school is not merely a reflection of economic practices or deterministic cultural reproduction, but is mediated by human action. The social and cultural control of institutions, knowledge and everyday life is vested in the constitutive principles, codes and common-sense consciousness underlying our understanding of social reality. Any macro-analysis of the relationship between the cultural and economic spheres of society must be complemented by an approach which addresses the cultural and ideological mediations which exist between the material conditions of an unequal society and the formation of the individual's consciousness in that society.

Recent developments in the study of classrooms, discussed by M. Apple,[12] focuses attention upon the integration of a phenomenological perspective with a macro-analysis of the larger arrangements of institutions in society. Building upon the foundations provided by M.F.D. Young and Associates,[13] sociologists of education are developing an understanding of the day-to-day practices of students and teachers within the classroom in relation to the principles of social and cultural control in society.

IDEOLOGY, HEGEMONY AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

The social order of society is much more than a imposed ideology of a ruling class. The internalization of the dominant principles, commonsense meaning and practices that maintain and legitimate the existing social order reflects a complex process of ideological hegemony. The reproduction of the existing social order involves a developmental process which initially fosters an understanding of what are considered to be the legitimate principles, meanings and values of society.

For example, Nancy King[14] demonstrated that the principles and categories that children develop to understand their social realities in a kindergarten classroom served not only as a foundation for the years of schooling to follow but also illuminated the role of the school within the complex nexus of economic and social institutions of society. Their adjustment to the operation of the classroom environment required recognition of a specific set of definitions, principles and meanings. King concluded that as part of their initiation into the kindergarten community, young children developed an understanding of the social categories important to the world of work.

To prevent further confusion ideology must be distinquished from hegemony. The concept of ideology is referred to as a relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as a world-view.[15] These systematic forms of thought do not represent the consciousness of individuals or groups in a given social context. Hegemony recognizes that consciousness is not equated with a formal abstracted system. Hegemony includes, but is not limited by ideology. It is not only the abstracted, central, effective and dominant system of ideas and ideologies, but the whole body of practices and expectations which shape our perceptions of ourselves and the social world. It is the lived system which "contributes a sense of reality for most people in society, a sense of absolute..."[16]. Thus, the inequalities and domination by certain social groups or classes is exercised through an apparent consensus that the existing educational, economic and social world that we live in is 'natural' and is assumed to be the 'only world'.

King's study reflects an approach to the issues surrounding what is taught in a kindergarten classroom as not merely analytical, technical, psychological, but as ideological. She considered the latent meanings and the configuration that lies behind the commonsense practices as problematic and documented the potency of particular social meanings and categorial systems in the classroom.

The study concluded that the teacher's objective of developing 'good workers' required the children to develop an understanding of a specific set of meanings, values and categories of social reality. The process

occurred naturally and was generally accepted by the children. In addition, the teacher's commonsense practices were shown to reflect the importance of the school as an institution which has a historical set of commonsense meanings, rules and expectations of teachers and students in the classroom.

King's phenomenological methodology was primarily concerned with 'how' one makes sense of their social world. This does not provide an adequate analytical framework for the understanding of 'why' children are labelled 'good workers' or why specific kinds of cultural meanings and categories are developed and reproduced. The actors and their activities must be situated within the broader framework of society. The micro based analysis of the day-to-day activities of a day care centre must be interpreted within a macro based analysis of the structural features of society. As Keddie expressed, the distribution and categories of classroom knowledge have their origins in the structure of society and its distribution of power.[17]

A critical analysis of day care would involve: 1) an examination of the overt and hidden knowledge and its ideological underpinnings of the way participants in a day care 'naturally' think about their day-to-day activities, and, 2) an examination of the linkages between this mediation and the economics, culture and consciousness of society.

EXISTING DAY CARE RESEARCH

A vast amount of research has been done of the possible effects day care may have upon children. A recent appraisal of the literature indicated that "we still know very little about the effect of day care on cognitive and emotional development."[18]

Similar to the achievement tradition of research on the effects of the school,[19] day care research has focused upon the measurement of intellectual development of day care children. Often, the testing instruments are the same, or similar to, the generally accepted psychometric instruments used in schools.

Such instruments have been linked to specific cultural groups and, in many ways, the instruments fail to capture the awareness of everyday activities. In addition, the selection of such instruments ignores the presupposition of what is construed to be valuable knowledge for children attending a day care to learn.

Day care has also been studied as an institution involved in the socialization of the child. Again, day care research has taken from the field of educational research. The purpose of many studies has been to determine how day care, as an agent of society, socializes children into an assumed set of 'shared' norms and values. The research instruments employed establish as given a set of societal norms and values and focuses on the correspondences or parallels between the set of norms, dispositions and values of society and the day care.

Existing research on the effect of day care indicates much more than a lack of knowledge of its effect on cognitive and emotional development. It demonstrates that day care research is dominated by the various psychological learning theories and, more importantly, that there is a lack of critical sociological analysis of day care in Canada. The language of psychological learning theories focuses upon the individual and learning is considered an apolitical and ahistorical process. The hegemonic and ideological nature of day care, like the school, is either taken for granted or ignored. The structures of society in which the activities of the day care occur are not recognized as relevant and the principles, ideas and commonsense categories developed and reproduced by all participants are perceived as natural. Focusing upon the measurement of acquiring certain propensities, skills and dispositions implies that such prior quiestions as 'why this knowledge?' and 'whose knowledge?' are irrelevant.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study from which this discussion is drawn is an attempt to address not only the lack of critical sociological analysis of day care in Canada, but also the methodological issues surrounding the integration of a phenomenological analysis of the micro processes of a day care centre within a broader analysis of ideology and hegemony in our society.

The ethnographic case study of the day care centre is interesting in and of itself by providing new insights and revealing gaps in existing knowledge. However, the study also endeavors to demonstrate that the forms of interaction in day cares and the set of neutral categories that give meaning to the participants actions serve as mechanisms for communicating normative and dispositional

meanings to children.

The following general questions are being examined:

1) What day-to-day problems faced by day care workers are solved through the application of normative interpretations?
2) What is the commonsense interpretative frame_ork of day care workers?
3) What are the ideological presuppositions of the day care workers interpretative framwork?
4) What is the commonsense interpretative framework of the children?
5) What are the ideological presuppositions of the children's interpretative framework?
6) What is the process of negotiation between the workers and the children?
7) What is the relationship between the workers' and the children's interpretative frameworks?

Often phenomenological studies of classrooms tend to underplay the importance of power and control inherent in the classroom situation.[20] To address these questions the phenomenological analysis of the day-to-day activities of the day care must be situated within a broader macro analysis of educational hegemony. In this way the external objectivated meanings inherent in the day care will be recognized.

Rather than attempt to describe and discuss each of the general questions of the larger study, the following seciton focuses upon some preliminary findings regarding the Saskatchewan Day Care Worker Training Program.

SOME PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: THE DAY CARE WORKER TRAINING PROGRAMS

An examination of the Saskatchewan Day Care Worker Training Program provides some insight into how the vision of education as a science functions ideologically. It also provides an indication of how hegemony is maintained within day cares through the overt and covert utilization of the recommended activities, group management techniques and evaluation perspectives in day cares.

The program consists of three major training areas; communications, child development and observation of children. Each worker is trained to deal with the day-to-day realities of the day care through the application of the recommended techniques and activities described in the training manual. The communication section focuses upon how to deal with confrontation and conflict through the promotion of group consensus and shared valuing. The child development section describes the aspects of a quality day care program and the evaluation section focuses upon the observation of children through the utilization of a pre-coded, pre-determined observational checklist.

The program assumes an acritical view of society and an overly technical and positivistic view of science. The basic assumptions of the program developers suggests that the curriculum field of day care is similar to the curriculum field of education. Both fields have limited their own form of consciousness such that the political and ideological assumptions underlying their perspectives, techniques and activities are taken for granted.

The workers' developed world-view of the day care, through the training program, is tacitly transmitted to the children, who learn certain identifiable

social norms mainly by coping with the day-to-day encounters and tasks of day care life. The fact that the learning of these norms, values, categories and dispositions pertain to may areas of later life is critical. It documents how day care contributes to individual adjustment to an ongoing social, economic and political order.

By focusing upon specific forms of rationality, the training program indirectly contributes to the development of individuals able to function and accept the existing political, cultural and economic arrangements of society as 'given' or 'natural'.

> "For if the 'facts' of the world do rest on our theories of them, then the world people see, the economic and cultural meanings they give to it will be defined in such a way as to be self-justifying"[21]

The day care worker training program must be examined in relation to the phenomenological analysis of the day-to-day activities of the day care. These preliminary observations tend to suggest a one-to-one correspondence between the recommended activities of the training program and the learned outcomes of the children attending the day care. Rather than imply a sense of futility with respect to the impact or contribution of micro level human mediations, the reconciled approach recognizes the possible emergence of a counter hegemonic consciousness. While the micro level actions of parents, day care workers and community organizations may promote the development of a counter hegemonic consciousness it is only through an honest and critical appraisal of the ways day care, in its present form, contributes to the hegemonic maintenance of the existing social order that a counter hegemonic consciousness may emerge.

SUMMARY

This discussion has briefly touched upon some of the major aspects of a research project in progress. The implications of the research approach for day care as an educational institution are obviously great. The micro phenomenological analysis in conjuction with the broader analysis of educational hegemony leads to a perspective of day care which de-emphasizes the procedures and outcomes of the institution and emphasizes the relations between children, parents, day care workers and curriculum activities as aspects of the larger social order. The daily activities of the day care participants and the forms of knowledge presented and shared are interpreted as "providing form and substance to the cultural imperatives of society".[22]

The research literature suggests that the expansion and differentiation of the formal years of schooling continues to be of great interest and concern to sociologists of education.[23] On the otherhand, the expansion and differentiation of early childhood and pre-school programs has received little or no attention from sociologists of education. If Apple is correct in stating that "ideological saturation will undoubtedly be more effective if it is done early in one's life"[24], then the increasing transfer of child care functions to the state and the domination of day care research and practices by professional educators requires extensive elaboration.

NOTES

1. Day Care Review, Saskatchewan Social Services, 1981.

2. Ibid, p 27 - 31. Also see, Status of Day Care in Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, 1978.

3. The Day Care Task Force Report, Social Services and Community Health, Province of Alberta, Canada, 1977. Also see, W. Fowler, Day Care and its Effects on Early Development, Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, Toronto, Ontario, 1978 for a discussion of the similarity of interaction is a day care centre to the interaction in a kindergarten classroom.

4. A literal English translation: view-of-the-universe.

5. The Zoning Bylaw and the Provision of Day Care Facilities in the City of Regina, Regina Planning Department, March 1983, p 3.

6. Ibid, p 7 - 8.

7. Saskatchewan Day Care Review, op. cit., p 54 - 78.

8. R. A. Carlton, "Popular Images of the School", in R. Carlton. L. Colley and N. MacKinnon (eds), Education Change and Society: A Sociology of Canadian Education (Toronto, Gage Ltd., 1977) p.37.

9. Ibid, p 37-38.

10. See, for example, S. Bowles and H. Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America (New York: Basic Books 1977) chapter 5.

11. P. Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproducation and Social Reproduction", in J. Karabel and A. Halsey (eds.) Power and Ideology in Education (New York: Oxford Press 1977).

12. M. Apple, Ideology and Curriculum, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul,1979).

13. See M.F.D. Young, Knowledge and Control (London: Collier-MacMillan, 1971).

14. See N. King, The Hidden Curriculum and the Socialization of Kindergarten Children, (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1976).

15. J. P. Grayson, "Male Hegemony and the English Canadian Novel", The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1983, p 1 - 3.

16. R. Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory", in R. Dale et al (eds.) Schooling and Capitalism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976) p 205.

17. N. Keddie, "Classroom Knowledge" in M.F.D. Young, Knowledge and Control, (London: Collier-MacMillan, 1971).

18. M. Provost, "The Effects of Day Care on Child Development", Canada's Mental Health, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1980, p 17.

19. M. Apple, op. cit., p 30 - 31.

20. See A. Green, Theory and Practice in Infant Education: A Sociological Approach and Case Study. (Universtiy of London,MSC dissertation) 1972.

21. M. Apple, op. cit., p 103

22. D. Dawson, "Educational Hegemony and the Phenomenology of Community Participation", The Journal of Educational Thought, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1982, p 158.

23. See, for example, J. Karabel "Community Colleges and Socail Stratification", in J. Karabel and A. Halsey (eds.) Power and Ideology in Education, (New York: Oxford Press, 1977) and P. Nelson and D. Nock (eds.) Reading Writing and Riches,(Kitchener, Ontario, Between the Lines Press, 1978).

24. M. Apple, op. cit., p 43.